

For Immediate Release: April 7, 2011
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Senator Stabenow and Senator Levin Side With Polluters Over Michiganders' Health

Ann Arbor — Today, Senator Stabenow and Senator Levin voted for a dangerous attack on Michiganders' health that would block the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to clean up dangerous carbon dioxide pollution. Four proposals—dubbed “The Filthy Four”—that would have prevented the clean-up of carbon dioxide pollution were considered and blocked in the U.S. Senate.

“Today Michigan's U.S. Senators had a choice: stand up for the health of our children, elderly citizens and other vulnerable populations, or do the bidding of America's biggest polluters,” said Nicole Lowen, State Associate with Environment Michigan. “Unfortunately, Senator Stabenow and Senator Levin sided with polluters at the expense of Michiganders' health and our environment.”

Public health groups urged Congress to reject The Filthy Four. The American Lung Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Thoracic Society, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America and others in the public health community sent letters to Congress in recent weeks opposing all of these proposals and other attacks on the Clean Air Act. And last week, 155 Representatives—including Representatives Clarke, Conyers, Dingell, Kildee, Levin, and Peters—and 34 Senators signed onto a letter and a resolution, respectively, each pointing to the success of the Clean Air Act and calling for it to be protected.

“Global warming presents serious threats to Michigander's health, our economy, and our future. The year 2010 tied as the hottest year on record globally, and if left unchecked, global warming will lead to more deadly heat waves, more asthma attacks, the spread of infectious disease, and more frequent and intense storms,” said Lowen.

“Rather than heeding the science and letting the EPA do its job to protect public health and our environment, these proposals' supporters want to give the biggest polluters a free pass to keep polluting and threatening our health,” concluded Lowen.

BACKGROUND

Just as EPA is poised to finally clean up the largest sources of pollution through the Clean Air Act, polluting industries and some in Congress are trying to block EPA from doing its job. This assault on public health came to a climax today when the Senate voted on proposals that would have blocked or weakened the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to clean up carbon dioxide pollution.

In the Senate, four proposals—dubbed The Filthy Four—were considered as amendments to an unrelated small business bill (S. 493), though none of these amendments received the necessary 60 votes to move forward:

- Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) offered an amendment that mirrored Sen. Inhofe's bill (S. 482) to block EPA from cleaning up dangerous carbon dioxide pollution, overturn scientific findings regarding the threats posed by global warming, and

block EPA and the states from cutting carbon dioxide pollution and saving oil through clean car standards.

- **Sen. Debbie Stabenow** (D-MI) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) offered an amendment that would block the implementation of standards to cut carbon dioxide pollution from coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and other industrial sources for at least two years, while exempting the agricultural sector from limits on carbon dioxide pollution.
- Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) offered an amendment that would block the EPA's ability to set standards—or even do research and gather stakeholder input to develop standards—to cut carbon dioxide pollution from coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and other industrial sources for at least two years.
- Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT) offered an amendment that would block the clean-up of global warming pollution from biomass facilities, and would permanently exempt even the very largest sources of global warming pollution from having to clean up their global warming pollution unless the source is also a very large source of other pollutants. **Senator Levin voted for this amendment.**

In the House of Representatives, Representative Fred Upton's (D-MI) bill H.R. 910, dubbed the Dirty Air Act, is expected to be voted on today in the full House.

- Representative Upton's Dirty Air Act mirrors Sen. McConnell's amendment described above, and would do at least three dangerous things:
 - Block EPA from cutting carbon dioxide and other global warming pollutants from coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and other industrial sources. Coal-fired power plants are the largest single source of global warming pollution in the United States.
 - Overturn EPA's "endangerment finding" regarding global warming pollution—the determination by EPA scientists that global warming pollution poses threats to public health and welfare—essentially saying that Congress knows climate science better than the climate scientists themselves.
 - Block EPA—and states—from issuing new standards for cleaner vehicles after 2017, and open up the 2012-2016 federal clean car standards to serious legal challenges. These standards are regarded as one of the easiest ways to cut our reliance on oil and save consumers money at the gas pump.

Environment Michigan is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization committed to clean air, clean water and open spaces
www.environmentmichigan.org